



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff **Scott Smith** Chief Deputy

July Sheriff's Column – Be Prepared

Have you ever thought about what to do if ever threatened with a weapon? I confidently can say that there are many of you who have, particularly those who may be bank tellers or those who work at a convenience store. I am certain there are some, however, who have not had that thought cross their minds. We must remember that although Dodge County is a safe place to live, we must all keep our guard up and be prepared.

So what should you do to be prepared? To answer that I would like to give you some insight on how law enforcement officers stay alert and prepared. Have you ever gone into a restaurant and seen an officer sitting in the corner with their backs to the wall? The reason is be able to see what is going on around us without having to look over our shoulders and for safety to ensure no one can come up behind us without our knowledge.

Officers also have a keen eye for detail, especially if we spot something that is unusual. We pay particular attention to those occurrences and immediately pay close attention to a person's hands. We also note clothing, physical characteristics and people who may be in the general vicinity. We listen closely to what is said and do our best to be professional witnesses should something occur. Of course if needed, we will take action to prevent an incident.

Any citizen can act in this very same way short of taking law enforcement action. I encourage you all to learn how to be an excellent witness. Being a good witness isn't something that you are just good at by nature. It takes practice. Many times during investigations, we have three sides to the story. Usually there is the story of both sides and the truth is somewhere in between. That is not to say that people are lying, because many times they are not. It just means that they may have perceived things differently because of their emotional state, their point of view or because of their individual observation skills. I can personally attest that I am a much keener observer than I was prior to my law enforcement career. It takes practice like any other skill.

Getting back to being confronted by someone with a weapon, be prepared ahead of time should you be. Have a plan of what you should do. Know your surroundings including where exits may be or objects that can act as cover or concealment from an attack by a weapon. If you work in an environment where a robbery is statistically higher, ensure you have drills with other employees on what you should do. Law enforcement train and drill to be prepared for any incident. Of course that isn't always possible but it is our goal to always practice response to a dangerous incident before it happens. You should do the same. If you don't, you may freeze up or make mistakes that could cost you your life. If you have practiced ahead of time, you may still make mistakes but your chances of survival are much higher than if you make it up as you go. The sheriff's office is always happy to help you develop a safety plan or help plan training if you need assistance. Please don't hesitate to reach out for help.

Law enforcement officers always tell each other to stay safe out there. I am also reminding you to all to stay safe out there. Be aware of your surroundings, be a great witness and be prepared. Together we can work together to keep making Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.